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ABSTRACT

The similarities between television viewing and fantasy activity (daydreaming, reverie, mind-wandering, internal dialogue) more than warrant the building of a theoretical construct, especially in the context of recent empirical research on television viewing consequences. A construct of the television viewing process, based on cognitive theories of fantasy activity would be based on the following similarities between television viewing and fantasy activity: (1) their physical correlates, such as eye fixations and relaxed, low arousal states; (2) their nonvolitional and effortless natures; (3) their lack of evaluative operations; (4) their allowances for sampling viewing styles (viewing may occur concurrently with operant activity, or in alternation with directed thought); (5) the adaptive character of their content; and (6) the lack of responsibility or obligation to act on or reply to what is presented. Although normal television viewing seems to facilitate behaviors analogous to self-generated fantasy, acceptance of the construct of television viewing as fantasy activity places logical limits on the value of the "perceived reality" approach to assessing viewers' responses. (RL)

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FANTASY ACTIVITY AND THE TELEVIEWING EVENT: CONSIDERATIONS FOR AN INFORMATION PROCESSING CONSTRUCT OF INVOLVEMENT

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Abstract

There have been few theoretical or empirical investigations of ongoing television viewing involvement, due primarily to methodological difficulties as well as the research agenda prevailing in mass communication. A processural construct of televiewing, based on cognitive theories of fantasy activity, is proposed. Relevant aspects of the fantasy process include its nonvolitional and effortless nature; the lack of evaluative operations; and the adaptive character of its content. Normative television usage facilitates the potentiation of responses analagous to self-generated fantasy. Acceptance of the construct places logical limits on the value of the "perceived reality" approach to assessing viewers' responses.

FANTASY ACTIVITY AND THE TELEVIEWING EVENT: CONSIDERATIONS FOR AN INFORMATION PROCESSING CONSTRUCT OF INVOLVEMENT

Theories of mass-mediated behavior have only recently begun to move beyond descriptive and simple, direct-effects models. The limitations on past theoretical efforts and inadequacies in most of the research already conducted suggest that more imaginative, even unorthodox approaches are required--especially process-oriented ones (Blumer, 1969; Smith, 1972; Anderson and Meyer, 1975; Anderson, Traudt, Acker, Meyer, Donohue, 1979). In particular, the cognitive and affective bases of the television viewing experience have until recently been ignored in favor of the uses, consequences, and behavioral aspects of the medium.

Reasons for the course of such research may be found in the behaviorist orientation of much experimental psychology research well into the 1960's; the policy origins of media research questions; and procedural problems scientists encounter in the study of covert mental processes. The behaviorist perspective, which implies that only concrete phenomena which can be directly measured are relevant, is a limited one in two important respects: (1) Correlations may be made among behaviors without being able to establish a basis for defining transformational mechanisms binding them; and (2) Vast areas of human experience are ignored that, while covert, nonetheless exist. In the field of mass communications, these shortcomings are manifested in much of what is known as "effects" research. Discrepant results from studies of attitude change, selective perception, and personal influence on media messages, to name a few areas, are due in part to presuppositions of either passivity or homeostasis-seeking on the part of their samples. The idea of the televiewer who uses the medium for organizing his or her daily activities and who reconstructs its content in ways unintended by the sender is more in accord with the

new information-processing perspectives (Wartella, 1979; Lull, 1979). This assumption of mediation of the television stimulus is increasingly being accepted in empirical studies of comprehension, role-taking, and mental skills (Desmond, 1978; Salomon, 1979; McCain and Ross, 1979), and is accepted for the purposes of this paper as well.

In terms of model-building, television viewing is treated here as a construct--that is, a concept which "has the added meaning . . . of having been deliberately and consciously invented or adopted for a specific scientific purpose (Kerlinger, 1973: 29)." Constructs may also be thought of as "invisible" variables whose properties have not been empirically verified, but are believed to explain a body of existing data (Miller and Nicholson, 1976: 112). The molar behavior of televiewing has not been satisfactorily defined as a qualitative construct, but rather, in the view of Salomon and Cohen (1978: 265), it is "commonly treated as a mere descriptive aspect of a behavior, with seemingly self-evident validity." They call attention to numerous studies with disparate aims that all refer to an act called "television viewing" without explicating what is meant by the term. As Salomon and Cohen observe:

> If indeed researchers in the field seem to invest more than meets the eye in measuring television viewing, then we may be faced with the inescapable conclusion that a construct, and not just an observable behavior, is implied. The question then becomes what is television viewing and what is it that we measure? (p. 266)

That question depends, of course, on the intent of the research question; the aspects of viewing relevant to a given study will vary. However, it is apparent that the molar behavior of televiewing, in terms of all aspects invested in that behavior, is very different qualitatively from other media behaviors such as reading, listening to radio, or attending a film.

The construct proposed in this paper states that televiewing may be

construed as a fantasy experience of a special order. The fantasy experience to which this paper refers is a characteristic cognitive process--not a product or stimulus with self-styled fantastic properties. Certain stimuli may have fantasy-inducing potential, but, as will be explained later, actual conversion of this potential is heavily dependent on subjects' predispositions toward and prior experience with said stimuli. As a first assumption underlying this construct, television viewing must be examined as a molar behavior in terms of the antecedents, consequences, and nature of a single act. This assumption is guided but not delimited by the situation of the viewer "involved with" the television stimulus. Social interventions, concurrent activities, and environmental events may certainly impinge upon and influence the quality of an individual's televiewing. In examining the viewer's conscious flow at the contact point with a mass medium, however, the dyadic relationship of the individual-engaged-in-televiewing is the relevant unit of analysis. The second assumption posits that televiewing, as a response element, does not constitute a new need or affective disposition that was not present before the advent of television. The human species obviously had the "equipment" with which to apprehend television when it was introduced on a wide scale in the late 1940's, and the speed with which it was accepted and integrated into daily living could well attest to its success in satisfying a given set of already-existing needs.

Recent Research. Historically, a number of loose theoretical strands have been woven around the idea of television as being separated from the realities surrounding the manifest concerns of people's lives. Schramm, Lyle, and Parker (1961) dichotomized a "reality orientation" and "fantasy orientation" in entertainment content; fantasy, in their view, "invites the viewer to take leave of his problems in the real world . . . invites surrender,

relaxation, passivity . . . offers wish-fulfillment (p. 63)." Katz and Foulkes (1962: 383), in an influential article on escape explanations of media usage, noted that such explanations tend to "avoid serious consideration of the function of fantasy and ignore other probable uses of this very same content." Mendelsohn (1966), in a treatise on mass entertainment, attempted to clarify the psychological functions of fantasy, particularly in seeing moderate fantasy activity as a sign of health, while denying that use of mass entertainment or fantasy means an "escape" from pain. However, the special characteristics that mark televiewing and its relationship to a solid framework of fantasy theory were still absent.

The 1960's and early 1970's saw much research which examined the causal connections between vicariously-experienced aggression and subsequent behavior. Although the treatment condition (film or videotape) was often labeled fantasy material or the dependent variables called acts of fantasy-inspired behavior, the conceptual basis still relied on the cathartic notion of release of anxieties or frustrated emotion via a fantasy experience. In that explanation, affective equilibrium is sought by an internal acting-out, through media experiences as well as daydreaming, of repressed tactics. As such, fantasy was regarded as a reification through imaginative projection of the means of obtaining gratification. The catharsis paradigm is now hypothesized to operate only under special conditions, if at all (Rabinowitz and Shouval, 1977); however, most of the evidence tends to refute it in favor of cognitive explanations (Klinger, 1971: 279-315; Comstock, Chaffee, Katzman, McCombs, Roberts, 1978: 423-9). To sum up, early conceptualizations tended to limit fantasy activity more to evasive than normative or self-actualizing functions. The arbitrary separation of fantasy and reality content has undercut the credibility of some studies (Hazard, 1966). Similarly, conceptualizations of fantasy as an obstruction in a transmission-belt model of communication

(Palmgreen, 1971) inevitably posed sender-biased hypotheses.

Feshbach (1976) addressed the possibility that television viewing itself, in the context of our everyday activities of daydreaming, make-believe, role-taking, and imaginative play, engages people in a fantasy activity. Feshbach asserted that fantasy embraces many dimensions--especially motoric activity and the degree to which a fantasy is construed as a reality experience--which determine the directions and possible outcomes of the fantasy experience. He noted five mechanisms that may operate to lessen aggressive responses as a result of "induced" fantasy via televised representation: substitute goal, expressive value, inverse of action, positive reinforcement, and cognitive restructuring. Whether they act to lessen or increase the probability of imitative aggression was said to be a function of the reality-fantasy dimensions of the modeled behavior, as perceived by the viewer.

Feshbach's work, which was actually a summary of his own researches, was part of a new openness and seriousness on the part of investigators of inner experience. The developmental perspectives of such theorists as Piaget and Bruner, emphasizing the importance of children's mental representations in task competence, were an early impetus. Much credit is owed to groundbreaking work by Tomkins (1962) on the central role of affects in human motivation and behavior. Information theory, cybernetics, and cognitive theory also influenced the development of hypotheses and research designs concerning fantasy behavior. The major theoretical works on the subject have been produced by Singer (1966; 1973; 1978) and Klinger (1971). This paper relies on Klinger for its exposition of fantasy, since his treatment is still by far the most precise, comprehensive, and far-ranging. Other sources than Klinger will be referred to when corroboration or elaboration are sought on particular points.

Fantasy: A Primer

Definitions of fantasy require a resignation to at least some ambiguity. As its direct measurement remains a methodological difficulty (which is an understatement), fantasy activity has traditionally been studied through verbal reports, survey inventories, and interpretations of projective tests. Some of the crucial distinctions in the construction of theory, then, are never quite in focus: for example, whether a given fantasy segment is really of homogeneous content, or how to distinguish between instrumental problem-solving and idle rearrangements of outcomes to a current concern. The operational definition employed here is Klinger's:

> Fantasy is defined as verbal reports of all mentation whose ideational products are not evaluated by the subject in terms of their usefulness in advancing some immediate goal extrinsic to the mentation itself; that is, fantasy is defined as reports of mentation other than orienting responses to, or scanning of, external stimuli, or operant activity such as problem-solving in a task situation. (1971: 9-10)

Inclusive in this definition are such other variously-deployed states as daydreaming, reverie, stream-of-consciousness, mind-wandering, internal dialogue, and waking dreams. Other qualities of fantasy--in terms of introspective reports--are its fundamental privateness, the sense of effortlessness, and its unfolding, permutating nature; these qualities are sensible and obvious to anyone who daydreams. Although fantasy activity is generally derogated in many cultures as unproductive, time-consuming, and unattentive behavior, its enactment in sampled populations is quite pervasive, if not normally universal. However, some cultures have recognized and rewarded the exercise of such fantasy-related activities as meditation and creative thought. Central to understanding the cognitive explanation of fantasy are its (1) Implications as a baseline psychological process, and (2) Multiple functions and uses.

Through results of sensory deprivation experiments and evidence that

mentation occurs during all stages of sleep, including non-REM periods, there is postulated a "single waking and sleeping baseline stream of ideation whose properties are modulated by fluctuation in the states of arousal and whose flow is interrupted only be certain incompatible activities (Klinger, 1971: 63)." If it is true that "the very nature of the operation of the brain requires a constant recoding and rehearsal of stored material (J. L. Singer, 1973: 194)," then there is no normal state in which mentation is absent. During waking periods, fantasy represents that baseline state to which humans revert when not ordinarily engaged in environmental scanning, instrumental tasks, or directed thought.

As mentioned earlier, narrow interpretations of the fantasy mode have steadily given way to more varied estimates of its functions. These functions relate strongly to the later discussion of fantasy as a response sequence, but for now it may be said that fantasy is generally potentiated by what Klinger calls current concerns: "unresolved current problems, unfinished tasks, role conflicts, and prominent affective responses, as well as the challenges of identity and commitment posed by the individual's social relationships (p. 49)." Singer (1975: 734) even refers to seemingly aimless and intrusive thought as constituting "a continuous planning and anticipating process." Putting these generalizations into more concrete terms, fantasy often exhibits curiosity or exploration, body-centered ruminations, tactical rearrangements, fearful or paranoid replays, hero-projection routines, and alternative, albeit improbable scenarios of a familiar situation such as a sexual encounter in a foreign locale.

Physical Conditions. Certain external features as well as internal processes and limitations characterize the occurrence of fantasy. First, fantasy reportedly occurs in low arousal states, in the midst of reduced or redundant environmental stimuli. These conditions presume the cognitive

model of limited channels in the assignment of internal ideational priority. The redundancy of the environment, social or physical, allows the individual to begin the re-processing of long-term memory elements, primarily those concerning an interrupted, yet still salient goal. Such re-processing, ordinarily fantasy activity, is liable to termination once the sensory modalities are engaged by significant changes in the environment or directed thought commences. In order to give priority to the internal channel concerned with daydreaming, reverie, or other complex thought, some ocular fixation usually occurs--essentially an aversive movement away from external stimuli. Such fixation may involve a loss of visual focus, i.e. the "blank stare" attributed to the daydreamer. Tracking movements of open eyes, exposing the individual to varied and attention-demanding stimuli in the immediate environment, drastically lower the probability of sustaining internal imagery (Singer, 1966, 121-2). Singer (1975) has also conducted research to suggest that people rating highly on positive-vivid daydream scales tend to shift their eyes to the left when processing external stimuli, particularly in conversation, and that "a shift to a neutral field is necessary for extended review of materials from the long-term storage (p. 736)." In conjunction with other evidence on brain hemisphere asymmetry, the eye shift observations indicate a right brain dominance in daydream activity.

Fantasy as a Respondent Sequence. Walls (1972) states that "daydreaming is conceptualized as a spontaneous symbolic expression of a person's mental state, and not a consciously controlled, intelligent mental act (p. 9-10)." Her emphasis on spontaneity and the lack of conscious control over fantasy ideation, while not totally clear, points to prominently unique components of fantasy qua process.

Whereas operant behavior refers to acts which are initiated volitionally, controlled by evaluative feedback at the cognitive level, and are proactive,

fantasy activity constitutes a form of respondent behavior. That is, respondent segments are initiated without conscious control, are elicited by antecedant events, unfold without recourse to feedback data, and are said to be reactive. The argument for fantasy as a response sequence rests on the following linkage, from Klinger: (1) Most consciousness manifests imagery; (2) Most evidence suggests that imagery is a response process, the result of efferent activity; therefore, (3) The imaginal components of fantasy are respondent. The issue of whether mental imagery is primarily pictorial or propositional may not be possible to resolve on strictly behavioral evidence, as Anderson (1978) points out; in fact, it may not be an either-or issue. It should be admitted that the theory's infrastructure turns on accepting the logic of fantasy as respondent in nature. Klinger himself notes the paucity of data using fantasy sequencing as a dependent variable--or direct evidence, for that matter, that fantasy is an efferent event[1]. The foregoing still begs the question, in what ways can a normal fantasy sequence be said to be respondent? The following steps reconstruct the essential elements of such a sequence.

Motivation and Potentiation. Again, the notion of current concerns--an instrumental activity which has been interrupted but not abandoned--arises in discussion of the initiation of fantasy sequences: "Whereas one might conceive of motivational states as directing overt behavior, it is better to speak of current concerns as potentiating fantasy content related to them, in the sense of increasing its probability of occurring (Klinger, 1971: 230)." Here, potentiation refers to setting a chain of events in a state of readiness, or likelihood of occurrence. The unabandoned, still salient goal of the current concern has not been extinguished by virtue of the fact that an incentive is anticipated. Incentives are reinforcing, in the classical behaviorist sense, in that the individual is sensitized "to respond

to discriminative stimuli that signal the feasibility of resuming the interrupted instrumental sequence (p. 242)." In what situations will a stream of operant activity revert or yield to the psychological baseline of fantasy? Although formulaic description is lacking, the following typology may be cited. Fantasy will commence automatically upon certain conditions of (1) Operant fatigue—" . . . a condition produced either by very intense effort during a short period or by longer periods of less intense but steady directed thought"; p. 214); (2) Hypnagogic and hypnapompic states; (3) High saliency of current concern incentives which overcome the saliency of the current operant motivational routines, whether they be repetitive tasks, a problem-solving sequence, or environmental scannings; and (4) Stimuli--in the form of an environmental cue or directed though component--triggering or priming a response sequence by "arousing semantic networks which makes the components of the network more readily available as responses than they would be otherwise (p. 343)."

Since the notion of current concerns presupposes a "latency" which persists through the execution of many operant sequences, we may also posit the existence of a hierarchy of motivational routines which experience fluid changes of saliency (i.e., deprivation levels) vis a vis each other. We have previously established that fantasy is a respondent process, cannot be generated in a willful manner, and is probably guided by affects. Does fantasy itself then constitute a motivational system of which particular motivational routines are manifested? It should be reiterated that current concerns represent motivational routines whose operant sequences have either not commenced or have been interrupted, but not abandoned. It appears unlikely that the system of affects, of which fantasy is a modal activity, is able to singularly initiate a goal-directed motivational routine. What, then, is the intersticial ground between the two and what part does fantasy play?

Subselves. Klinger invented a term for describing an individual's existing self-system--"of which enduring organizations of response tendencies form part (p. 206)"--called a subself. The subself, which may be one of many that recur more or less recognizably, implies that an individual is a different sort of person at some times than at others:

> "Subself" is merely a label for covarying personal characteristics, but these can covary more or less closely, they can include a few categories of response or many, and they can emerge jointly under specifiable conditions. . . . In general, it appears that subselves encompass a certain affective tone, certain dispositions to respond instrumentally, and an enhanced readiness to recall certain associated verbal memories while suppressing nonassociated memories either through direct inhibition or through response competition. (p. 207)

However artificial as a concept, the term conveniently subsumes the idea that an affective intonation of a current concern can cause it to be queued up --i.e., potentiated--and eventually "break through" to consciousness as a fantasy routine.

Klinger describes a series of experiments in which television performances featuring achievement-oriented models elicited in most conditions a tendency for subjects' TAT fantasies to show achievement-oriented, hero scores. One intriguing results is that the subjects' adjectival descriptions of the models they viewed were largely uncorrelated with the achievement scores (n Ach) of their TAT fantasies. In other words, the TAT fantasies did not reflect a point-by-point imitation of the respective descriptions of the models, but rather exhibited a significantly greater inflation of n Ach in those experimental conditions where the characters modeled "achievement motivation." In this, Klinger perceived that "the subself was still the subject's own and did not necessarily conform in intensity or in its detailed configuration to the subject's perception of the achievement attributes portrayed by the actor (p. 139)." On this conclusion Klinger hypothesized the workings of a subself. Other authors have recognized a subself-like process without naming it as such.

(1976: 102) states that daydreams occur "when the ego is not aware, but in a state of identification." Gottlieb (1973: 162) postulates that "Interaction between imaginative predisposition and modeling is expressed in eliciting effects. Responses latent in the observer will be released by exposure to the model." From Klinger's evidence in particular, the tentative conclusion of a "drawing out" of affective disposition in certain subjects--and television's ability to potentiate a subself--shows the vague outlines of a relationship between televiewing and normal fantasy.

Fantasy Segments and Sequencing. Earlier it was stated that fantasy activity allows no evaluative feedback during its unfolding. At the same time, fantasy was identified as a respondent process--i.e., the activity is elicited by prior events, not emitted on its own. Both statements comment broadly on the content of segments and their sequencing, and require elaboration.

Klinger argues that, just as psycholinguistic evidence exists to demonstrate that "language is organized into functional groupings of words whose interrelationships transcend word-to-word associations (p. 153)," fantasy segments express hierarchically-ordered semantic networks. Simply put, fantasy activity produces integrated response sequences that constitute full grammatical expressions that (1) are coordinated by a plan, or syntax, prior to elicitation, (2) flow effortlessly and nonvolitionally precisely because they are overlearned, and (3) incorporate feedback "to influence the flow of integrated behavior not in the form of an S-R chain but as a continuous modulating influence (p. 172)." Evaluative feedback concerning the logic or conscious manipulation of elements cannot occur. But there is leeway in the deployment of particular elements of the pre-set fantasy sequence to meet the demands of the occasion, or as a result of direct thought evaluations of previous fantasy routines. Klinger sums up the

structure of fantasy this way:

> Fantasy leaves the environment unchanged, and by definition there is manifestly no planned goal against which to evaluate its progress. Under these circumstances, the operation of feedback is quite different. Fantasy responses produce changes in stimulation only insofar as their content instigates further ideational content or arouses affect. If segments are governed internally by plans, meaning-complexes, motor programs, or subselves, then the effects of fantasy on feedback occur at the end of segments, rather than continuously as in the case of continuously monitored, directed verbal or other motor activity. Fantasy may thus be considered directed by feedback but not corrected by it. Fantasy is ballistic, not guided. It is hurled forward at each juncture by the new processes cued off by its preceeding content, but its aim is blind and unintentional. (p. 181)

Summary. Fantasies do not follow patterns of randomly-organized sequences. Nor are they closed systems. Fantasy activity partakes of the concerns and goals of everyday life and its products may be evaluated via directed thought for their viability. (Refer to Table 1 for the essential differences between fantasy and directed thought.)

TABLE 1

Fantasy routines, which tend to cycle repeatedly with some variation, are sequences whose outcomes are more or less constant and whose narrative unfolding--dependent on the nature and proximity of their incentives--may show some flexibility while adhering to a pre-set, hierarchical structure. Subselves, in linking motivational systems with affects, identify incentives and potentiate certain fantasy routines associated with that subself. Fantasy, in this context, functions in some situations as a "rehearsal area" for instrumental strategies, and in other situations as a "recurring stimulant" for reaching recurrent goals. An example of first might be the creative incubation periods for a writer prior to beginning a work of fiction; an example of the second might consist of a highly-routinized sexual daydream that recurs consistently for a person over a period of time.

It should be emphasized that fantasy activity does not imply a self-

centered gratification activity only. Just the opposite, in fact, would appear to be the case. Children's play episodes, even in solitude, exhibit imaginative attempts at recreating observed patterns of adult interaction. Adolescents' daydreams center predominantly on social and sexual concerns, achievement explorations, and competence strivings. Adult life cycles show more varied styles and contents of fantasy, less oriented towards the future and more concerned with alternative means of instrumental activities. Utilizing interviews as well as factor analyses of daydream and personality survey inventories, Singer (1966: 75-77) has derived the following typology of daydream styles: general daydreaming; self-recriminating daydreaming; objective, controlled thoughtfulness; poorly controlled kaleidoscopic daydreams; neurotic, self-conscious daydreaming; autistic daydreaming; and enjoyment of daydreaming. One of those styles may predominate for an individual, or varying arrays of them may work in combination under shifting circumstances. Additionally, a particular daydream could embody a different style or serve different functions at various points in the life cycle. (As an example, a child daydreaming of becoming President is probably engaging in a very different experience--in terms of achievement possibilities--than a middle-aged man fantasizing of becoming President.)

The fantasy mode of conscious thought can be an attractive state to return to, for the fundamental reason that real world constraints are nonexistant. A gradual movement away from purely behaviorist influences makes it apparent that fantasy "represents only one manifestation of a more general class of phenomena perhaps best described as internally generated diversions from an ongoing motor or cognitive task (Singer, 1970: 133)." The television viewing phenomenon may itself represent one other fantasy-like process. The next section considers a construct based on that possibility.

A Televiewing Fantasy Construct

Some theorists of fantasy activity have considered but discounted the notion of television viewing as constituting a form of fantasy experience. Since the following two arguments reveal an interesting similarity, they will be offered here:

> It is apparent . . . that "vicarious fantasy" in the form of films, television, reading, etc., is quite different psychologically from subject-produced fantasy such as daydreams or TAT stories. The content of external media is fixed independently of the viewer's state, there is no possibility that the content can drift or cycle in accordance with the subject's inner processes, and, indeed, the role of the viewer requires continued absorption in external stimuli. (Klinger, 1971: 311)

> Commonplace symbolic activities which seem to be likely substitutes for daydreaming activity are fantasies which are consciously constructed and directed by a person, plans for the future and reconstruction of the past (again, not spontaneously, but through directed thinking), and "borrowed fantasies," available to people in popular novels and the mass media . . . A disadvantage of replacing daydreaming by deliberately constructed symbolic activities is that the function of mental and physical relaxation that daydreaming serves cannot be met. (Walls, 1972, 23)

In the face of these objections, what can be the role of fantasy in television viewing? Does the external stimulus condition of television, which would appear to contradict the no-scanning tenet of our working definition, automatically nullify the construct? Singer notes that "adolescents who show active and varied fantasy lives tend to be more extensive readers but we cannot be sure whether a causal aspect is involved. . . . The ready availability of television and the movies leads also to the young person's reliance on them instead of carrying on individual fantasy activity (1966: 166)."

The overt difference between the first two theorists and Singer is the latter's suggestion that reading and televiewing are enormously nonequivalent experiences. As the two activities vary widely among such factors as social setting and acceptability, sensory modalities, control of "replay" of media content, and so on, their nonequivalence should not be surprising. Another difference is in the expenditure of effort required for

reading; in this regard, Walls' assertion that the effortlessness and relaxation of cortical energy exemplified by fantasy are not present in televiewing is unfounded. Klinger sees the role of viewer as circumscribed by continued absorption in the stimulus, a condition that is characteristic of neither fantasy nor television viewing; sampling of TV programs while engaged in other activities is, in fact, a normal style of viewing. Klinger also states that the fixed nature of a TV program denies the possibility that the viewer may have induced fantasy, or is cycling fantasies on his or her own accord. In this case, Klinger has miscast the issue since (a) the viewer retains control over the choice of programs to view, and (b) the ritualized pattern of much TV program content does approximate the structure of fantasy routines. In short, several of the theorists' objections appear uninformed, if not naive.

Similarities. There exist in television usage a number of qualitative features which are either shared by, are similar to, or are suggestive of normal fantasy activity. The similarities between the two activities that follow more than warrant the building of a construct--especially in the context of recent empirical research of television viewing consequences.

1. Physical correlates include confinement of the eyes to a relatively small area approximating ocular fixation, and the relaxed, low arousal state with little accompanying motoric activity and slow brain wave activity (Krugman, 1971).

2. The generally effortless use of the TV receiver. It may be turned on or off without much prior training or great exertion. Interpretation of the visual/aural content requires a minimum of cortical mediation, overt learning, or translation of symbolizations. Most of the "training" occurs naturally at relatively early ages, as a result of inadvertant learning of rules from those possessing facility and control over the medium at the time--

usually parental intervention.

3. The structure of television content, as apprehended affectively, very closely approximates the structure of normal fantasy. That is, editing techniques build integrated sequences of image and sound that elicit --in respondent chains--homogeneous, albeit discontinuous content segments.

4. The allowance of sampling viewing styles. Viewing may occur concurrently with operant activity, or in alternation with directed thought, in precisely the same manner as fantasy.

5. The TV receiver is an integral part of the household, blending in well with habitual social patterns, just as much of fantasy occurs in highly redundant (i.e., familiar or safe) environments. The American norm of all-day programming, in conjunction with a popularly-held attitude of "Free TV," inspires a public utility/home appliance framework for the medium. Integration of programs into the normal eight-hour workday and other segments of time, together with the preceding elements, maximizes the availability of televiewing as a viable fantasy recourse.

6. Tentative evidence suggests that induced fantasy, via a behavioral model, is dependent on certain subself elements and may result in predicted behavioral changes. The experimental paradigm, TV-modeled behavior ⟶ induced fantasy ⟶ imitated behavior, suggests an interesting link between the two activities which will be explored later.

7. Televiewing is a communication form in which there exists no responsibility or obligation to act or reply to what is presented, so that there exists a freedom to engage in indulgent or experimental role-taking. This point deserves amplification. In interpersonal communication, some manner of dialogue, negotiated meaning, and anticipated reply is more or less understood. These conditions, in turn, presuppose (1) environmental scanning of the communicants' vicinity for facial, paralinguistic, proxemic, and other

cues; and, (2) an ideational feedback process in which ongoing dialogue is matched against past dialogue and future incentives, replies are rehearsed, and corrections in interpretations of past events are made. These activities obviate a fantasy experience.

D. Singer (1978) has also identified some properties of the television medium--such as brevity of sequences, interference effects, and emotional range--which would favor a fantasy mode of information processing. The similarities cited here are neither necessary nor sufficient for a complete fantasy explanation of televiewing. For the purposes of the construct, however, enough evidence exists to justify some elementary model-building.

Some Features of a Process. What is the nature of "communication" implied in an act of television viewing? First, it can be stated with some assurance that there are extents to which an individual allows him or herself to engage in televiewing, known colloquially as "depth of involvement." Dimensions of involvement are beginning to be explored (Krugman, 1971; Bybee, 1978). Specific measures have consisted of frequency of concurrent activities, time of eyes on screen, and strength of viewing attention (through the use of distractor devices). However, realizations that the viewing experience does not require constant eyes on screen and that ocular fixation might belie a thought sequence unrelated to the content being presented demonstrate the operational elusiveness of involvement. Researchers should also be prepared to find that some variables--such as recall of information--may not correlate positively with involvement (Nasser and McEwen, 1976). And there has been little consistency in the "high" and "low" attributes of involvement; for some studies, high involvement means a greater degree of ego identification, while for others it translates as a physiological measure of cortical activity. Cohen and Salomon (1979: 162) explain cross-cultural differences in children's literate televiewing in terms of a "construct of mental effort investment, or

depth of processing." Their criterion of literate television viewing, involving the use of mental operations on the material viewed, may have mitigated the conclusions they draw regarding normative information processing during televiewing. Consequently, their interpretations were based on differences of styles of televiewing rather than the actual, "untrained" contact point of viewer and medium.

In lieu of more precise conceptualization, involvement is considered here as synonymous with a purely fantasy mode of information processing, in which mental operations such as sorting, comparing, evaluating, and deciding are absent. Given situational and motivational conditions, involvement can be predicted in terms of probabilities of occurrence. These probabilities, in turn, are dependent on an individual's learned discriminations--i.e., the unconscious conventions by which people orient themselves to television usage in the fantasy mode and by which instances of program selection are assessed for expected rewards, given the expenditure of effort and competing incentives. The concept is not new, only its specific usage. Singer (1973) makes use of the construct of a child's set, or predisposition "toward attention to inner activities which may be acquired to some extent through actual experience or modeling or encouragement by adults (p. 196)." This set may be shaped by a number of practices and sanctions: availability of playthings and imaginational materials; opportunities for privacy and freedom from the intrusion of peers or adults who might make demands on perceptual attention; and availability of adult models for demonstrating the use of make-believe and story-telling devices.

Learned discriminations assume an active process of sorting among cues (TV channels, other leisure activities, time of day, state of arousal, etc.) according to an inadvertantly learned body of experiences. They are formed at a fairly early age, probably prepubescent, and are reinforced by primary

group interactions and the individual's history of contact with media of all kinds. The degree to which an individual is able to use self-generated fantasy for positive purposes is an important factor as well. For example, one could hypothesize that parental disapproval of childhood play and later fantasy internalization, along with a laizzes-faire policy of televiewing, will result in very specific learned discriminations--i.e., rules and expectations--concerning that individual's likelihood of deriving fantasy satisfaction from television in adult life. The degree of inadvertance involved in learning fantasy usage rules within the home undoubtedly depend on a wide range of family policies for much of their direction (Chaffee, McLeod, and Atkin, 1971). The consequences of accepting televiewing as a fantasy construct are as follows:

(1) The learned discriminations--incorporating codes on viewing style, program preferences, and amenability to fantasy activity--channel people's expectations regarding contact with the medium. Since children encounter the TV receiver in the home before any articulated motivation toward its use has developed, parental influence--in the form of approval, censorship, denial, and encouragement of media usage and the whole range of imaginative devices--greatly impact on their motivations toward media fare in later life. Experiments and curricula for developing critical televiewing and parental guidance of children's viewing habits are essentially exercises in determining how television fantasy experiences can be made conscious, interrogated, and managed by the child viewer. Whether the rules of the learned discriminations remain invariant across the lifespan is a question requiring research.

(2) Acceptance of this approach places the conjoined concepts of "willing suspension of disbelief" and "perceived reality" in jeopardy. These concepts state that the individual matches the external environment, as directly experienced, against the narratives and characterizations portrayed on television.

If they do not match--i.e., if there is a discrepancy between the depicted reality and the viewer's own experience--then the TV segment will be construed as "fantasy," indicating little degree of similarity. Under such conditions, it is postulated (Feshbach (1976), there is little likelihood of transference of the depicted behaviors to the viewer's own behavioral repertoire. However, if there is a high degree of similarity--if the depicted behavior is in agreement with the viewer's own direct experience with the subject matter--the TV segment will be perceived by the viewer as consistently real, inducing a suspension in his disbelief of the artifactual circumstances of the viewing act. Under this condition, the likelihood behavior transference is higher. To recapitulate the argument: if the TV segment is perceived as unreal, the artifactual circumstances of the medium, the setting, and the depicted material heighten, thus inciting disbelief. If the TV segment is perceived as real, the artifactual aspects are muted, permitting a "belief" in the depicted material to proceed.

(3) The validity of the perceived reality construct turns on the viewer willingly lowering his objections and resistances to the contrived features of the viewing situation as a result of matching his experiences against the depicted material. This construct does not square with the theoretical understanding of fantasy advanced here on the following points:

(3a.) The reality-matching process of perceived reality indicates a volitional, goal-directed operation during televiewing which contradicts the preconditions of fantasy.

(3b.) The process of reality-matching assumes a criterion for reality on which a dichotomous differentiation of depicted material between "real" and "fantasy" may be plotted. Recent theory proposes that much fantasy involves the irrational rearrangement of current concern elements for rational purposes (incentives) that relate to the external world. To an extent, then,

all is legal within fantasy as long as it is useful for the purposes of the current concern.

(3c.) The generally-accepted notion that play behavior becomes channelized, with maturation, as fantasy activity (along with deferred gratification) strongly suggests that fantasy is activated by means of an interaction of stimulus cues, predispositions, and expectancies normally acquired in childhood. Thus, although fantasy occurs nonvolitionally, one may still structure and pre-set the conditions for its enactment via acquired knowledge of social sanctions, environmental demands on attention, rewards gained from fantasy, and so on. As such, the "willing suspension of disbelief" does not involve a cognitive gatekeeping function in contact with an ongoing TV program so much as a pre-setting of environmental conditions and affective expectations in advance of a televiewing event. In effect, people "set the stage" for fantasy to naturally unfold. If interventions or inconsistencies in those conditions and expectations do occur--such as the arrival of another person in the viewing vicinity, or a TV actor suddenly breaking character--then a directed thought sequence will initiate, temporarily breaking up the fantasy.

It should be stressed that the learned discriminations by which a television-induced fantasy occurs are heavily dependent on a regularity of cues. If one or more important cues are absent or distorted--e.g., if the viewer is in an agitated state of arousal--the involvement may be very low and no fantasy sequence will ensue. Just as an individual will schedule some daydreaming during the morning drive to work without being conscious of the regularity, viewing favorite programs between structured blocks of time exhibits the same effortless sense of habitual selection, triggered by affective cues. The more one deviates from the schedule--by viewing at odd times of day or being prevented from exercising control over program selection--the more directed thought will intrude. In effect, one would be "thinking about" the content, instead of being involved

with it.

This reorganization of the perceived reality construct, modified in light of fantasy theory and an acceptance of televiewing as a variant of fantasy, seems to point to a new view of reality-matching. That is, instead of television narrative and characterization elements being matched against the viewer's direct experience, those elements may elicit responses from the viewer's fantasy routine hierarchy. At a later point from the instance of fantasy involvement with a TV segment, that material may indeed be matched, on a conscious level, against environmental evidence or events in memory. Much of the perceived reality literature situates its dependent measures at a distance from the televiewing act, allowing respondents the convenience of deliberative reality-matching. However, in vivo televiewing involvement is a completely different constraint: reality-matching would not seem to be possible while the viewer is engaged in a fantasy interaction with television. It should further be emphasized that the systematic questioning of their TV reality perceptions is probably a highly artificial pursuit for most respondents, especially children, with results that may or may not be isomorphic with the viewing activity.

Televised characterizations and narratives present highly abstracted distillations of the situations which they purport to represent. The notion that televiewing experiences may be comprehensible only with reference to symbol systems already in existence is convergent with the views of Worth and Gross (1974: 27):

> In order to recognize the structure which defines a communication event --as distinguished from a natural event--we must bring to that act of recognition an assumption of intention. We must assume that the structure we recognize is, in a sense, "made," performed, or produced for the purpose of "symbolizing," or communicating.

The perceived reality construct ignores a number of epistemological problems in its research program that directly relate to the natural/symbolic distinc-

tion. Two basic ones may be cited here: (1) The inevitable stereotyping that results from a representational medium; and (2) The probability that the semantic networks constituting a person's knowledge of any referent are made up of both symbolic and natural inputs that are not tagged as such in long-term memory. The relationship of fantasy routines, and TV portrayals as well, to their natural referents is more a metaphorical one than causal or correlational. (We do not expect Marcus Welby to be representative of doctors we have known, nor is Columbo purported to be the typical police lieutenant in terms of personality, his modus operandi, or the exotic cases he deals with. Our understanding of the TV conventions of entertainment characters, the action-adventure genre, and certain ideological features shared by the audience constitute some of the learned discriminations by which Columbo is accepted. Our believability is not enhanced by what we personally know of police lieutenants.)

The tenuousness of the reality-matching concept, however, does not necessarily rule out a transfer of television-depicted behaviors during the fantasy involvement. As mentioned earlier, fantasy responses are organized hierarchically before they are actually elicited; but it is the plan or syntax of that overlearned integrated sequence that is queued up in advance, not the content. The filled-in fantasy narrative depends on the nature of present affective cues, memory influences, and individual abilities to creatively rearrange existing elements. Analagously, a television program could "fill in" the structures of fantasy routines with behaviorally-modeled information. The inability of television to easily cause attitudinal or behavioral changes may be due to the fact that viewers do not transact with the medium on a logical, even rational basis. The affective dimensions which involve viewers are hardily resistant to structural change for the simple reason that they are fundamentally integrated with the individual's self-

system. Transference of behavior would seem to depend on which fantasy routine and subself are engaged at the time that televiewing is elected, along with the viewer's assessment of reward from behaving in like manner.

Other considerations for predicting transference would be those dimensions --self-esteem, for one--that seem to determine the learning of modeled behaviors (Baran, 1974). Modeling influences on fantasy ability also seem to be strongly related to imaginative predisposition and level of cognitive development (Gottlieb, 1973) and self control (Bandura, 1977). Klinger reviewed the literature of experimental effects of modeled behavior on subjects' projective fantasies, leading to the speculation that "a stimulus can elicit a subself only if the subject has a concern--perhaps a weak concern--in the area of his subself (p. 339-340)." More generally, the evidence reviewed confirms most of the prevailing opinion regarding the transference of aggressive behaviors (Liebert, 1972).

Conclusions: Taking the Construct to the World

It should now be clear that, while studies exploring the effects of adult intervention (Singer, 1976) and perceived reality (Greenberg and Reeves, 1976; Hawkins, 1977) on children's televiewing and play are beginning to appear, fantasy as a dependent variable of television viewing has yet to be adequately examined. Clearer and more precise theoretical discourse is needed. While escapism as a motivation of fantasy in general and televiewing in particular has been largely purged from the literature, such other constructs as perceived reality and involvement need to undergo thorough critical treatment. Greenberg and Reeves (1976: 94-95) seem aware of the emptiness of unverified constructs when they comment that "most paradoxical is our continuing inability to demonstrate that personal experiences with content phenomena make any sort of difference in children's perceptions. . . . Perceived

reality is of social and scientific interest only if it explains consequent behavior." To what behaviors or phenomena is fantasy connected? Considering the nature of the exercise so far, it might seem specious to specify the real-world disturbances directly attributable to this invisible variable. Yet, constructs are born in order to raise good hypotheses, and there is obviously no shortage of fascinating and unexplained phenomena occurring concomitantly with the act of televiewing.

The success of American entertainment television would seem to lie in its ability to encourage the release of fantasies from a subself. The notions of audience identification with TV personalities and para-social interaction with certain programming suggest apparent parallels with certain fantasy routines. Soap operas are a genre that recylces a number of problem-solving routines for its audiences and is represented by characters with whom identification is openly invited. Moreover, they attract highly devoted audiences that participate without the constraints normally observed in overt involvement. The audience's normal aloneness in viewing them at midday and the programs' integration with ongoing workday tasks also contribute to their fantasy utilization.

The relationship of fantasy activity to the phenomenon of habituation and habit-forming tendencies has not been thoroughly investigated. Televiewing is frequently said to be a habitual behavior, but what are the characteristics that mark its development from the time a program is first viewed? The common criticism of prime time programming as formula-plotted, or as recurring in cycles (as with the situation comedy genre), could be attributed to the redundant appeal of certain fantasy routines. The repetitiveness of formulaic story lines--a syntax structure filled in with classes of content--resembles a fantasy routine expressive of a subself.

State-dependent learning is said by Klinger (1971: 208-9) to involve

the elicitation of a subself. In other words, verbal material learned in an affectively-toned setting will be later recalled when the same or similar affective cues are present. Consumer behaviors, such as label recognition in supermarkets or the car showroom test-drive, might be construed as ones "learned" in advertising environments. Uses and gratifications results have also pointed to "unintended" uses of news programming, indicating some affective and exploratory gratifications (Levy, 1977).

Methodological Issues. The foregoing indicates that the construct is heavily dependent on analogy and inference. It is not so simple a matter to state that research must be briskly pursued; the very difficulty of validating the methodologies for studying fantasy activity causes hesitation. Experimental paradigms certainly promise to yield useful data, in spite of the artificiality of the settings and tasks employed and the doubtful results of projective tests that often seem to represent mere traces of original fantasy routines. Much fantasy activity happens in short bursts; how much validity can be placed in laborious verbalizations of them, particularly in searching the crucial junctures in fantasy sequencing? Attempts at using wave-form instrumentation to directly monitor neurological activity are increasing, although it is difficult to infer semantic structures from the data.

Theoretically, there are no barriers to using behavioral observations for the study of consciousness (Mead, 1934). Klinger (1978) has described several viable procedures for drawing out open-ended accounts as well as more standardized information of inner processing. He has found that, after brief practice periods, most subjects adapt rather easily to describing and rating their own conscious flow during thought-sampling exercises. Transferring these procedures to the televiewing setting will require special considerations. Foremost among these are (1) Adaptation of research tasks or measurements to

the natural setting; (2) Minimization of researcher intrusion; (3) Correlation of protocols with TV content and social/situational events; and (4) Emphasis on processural rather than cross-sectional, discrete variable approaches. The researcher might set groundrules with the subject that "ask" him or her, once engaged in televiewing, to respond to certain mnemonics. Use of a mnemonic device would hopefully soften the intrusion and elicit a meaningful response before decay of the mentation from short-term memory.

Perhaps more theoretical mileage could be had from studyng the structural aspects of individuals' media usage than from the en masse testing of isolated variables. Field methods that derive from psychoanalytic or ethnological techniques of analyzing the accounts that people give of their everyday practices could assist the study of fantasy in natural settings. The very covertness and usually unexamined nature of fantasy could well require the development of techniques for reifying protocols, similar to techniques for recalling dreams upon waking.

Implications for Research. As mentioned earlier, a construct intends to conceptualize for a specific scientific purpose. The primary effect of this attempt is to pull together some rather localized evidence for the purpose of systematizing the data. The secondary effect, and the most important one, is to develop a new construct. The following hypotheses and speculations suggest only a few of the relationships between televiewing and fantasy, particularly in social contexts.

1. What are the effects of high exposure to television on children's self-generated fantasies and role-taking capacities? It is becoming apparent that not only is imaginative play an essential developmental component (Piaget, 1962; Singer, 1966; Pines, 1978), but also that children respond to television quite differently than adults (Broadcasting, 1977). If two of the main functions of fantasy are problem-solving and the expression of subselves

such as achievement, some of television's conventions--such as the resolution of complex problems by extra-legal means and in a 60-minute format--could have effects on those functions among children. One might hypothesize that high-exposure children will manifest a fantasy repertoire less rich than that of children whose imaginative capabilities are encourage and more closely managed by parents through respect for children's privacy and such activities as story-telling and television receivership skills.

2. Singer (1973: 219) states that "the events taking place on radio stories may have had a beneficial effect in increasing the range and scope of imagery capacity for a large number of children. This seems to be less the case for television which provides an external substitute for the imagery . . ." Study of the inducement of fantasy by different media, particularly the ones suggested by Singer, could provide evidence on ways in which information is entered in memory in the fantasy mode, as well as the existence of variants of the fantasy mode.

3. Most fundamentally, there is a need to conceptualize precisely what sort of conscious process occurs during televiewing and how it integrates with behavior. Klinger's objection that the media are set independently of the viewer is much less important than that viewers (1) have the power to select programs most closely aligned with their affective dispositions, and (2) have rules and expectations (i.e., learned discriminations) that guide their approach to the media. It is possible that fantasy routines are suddenly-surfaced aspects of an ongoing process of symbol maintenance in which the self-selection of media programming may play a large role. Applied research exploring the learning of commercial break material suggests certain primacy and recency effects. It may be that directed thought during televiewing occurs primarily in the transitions between programs, commercials, scenes, and other program bits. This would be consistent with the explanation that external

events and cognitions enter into memory via a combination of semantic fit and sufficient rehearsal. Learning, however, does not always lead to performance. Future research might investigate a hypothesis of different TV fantasy behaviors based in part on the nature and frequency of self-generated as well as television-generated interruptions.

NOTES

1. Efferent events refer to neural activity that originates in the cortex of the central nervous system, as opposed to afferent events, which originate in sensory receptors and are relayed to either the cortex or other components of the nervous system (as with automatic reflexes). Efferent events, by definition, re-process information already in memory.

TABLE 1

Oppositional Relations

FANTASY	DIRECTED THOUGHT
Nonvolitional	Volitional
Respondent (Behavior is elicited)	Operant (Behavior is emitted)
Process is affectively-guided, but not subject to evaluative feedback during its course.	Process is subject to evaluative feedback.
Utilizes long-term memory only.	Interacts with short-term and long-term memory.
Motivational schemas oriented to "latent" current concerns: interrupted, but unabandoned goals.	Motivational schemas oriented toward immediate goals.
Ocular fixation/Perfunctory attention to redundant external environments.	Works with, attends to external environment.
Low arousal state; concurrent with overlearned motor activities only.	Varying arousal states; capable of novel motor activities.

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